

**Transcription: Albert Kamenicky**

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*Hi, this is Tom Cengle.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, how are you doin'?

*Good, good. Are we ready to go this morning?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** This morning?

*Yes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Let's see, today is uh -

*Monday.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Monday. I done screwed up, didn't I?

*OK.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** But uh, yeah, I'm ready.

*You can do it?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*OK. You somewhere comfortable?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah.

*In your easy chair?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I got my chair and done been to the, to the little room.

*OK, all right, good. And we talked about how we're gonna do this and what have you, and I'll just kind of help you through because I got a whole bunch of questions, which we'll deviate from and what have you as, because what we really want to do is capture your feelings and history of what occurred to you at that time. So we'll just go through. There's a couple of things that I begin with to explain to you what it's about, and then we'll start the process.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** OK sir.

*We all set now?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, I was kind of just lolly-gagging around here, and I wasn't paying much attention to the time. I had it down a little bit different, but that's all right.

*OK, you're sure it's OK now?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah.

*We're ready. OK?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** OK.

*OK. And here's gonna be the start. My name is Tom Single. And I'm with the General Land Office in Austin, Texas. Today is December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007. Oh I'm sorry, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007. It's approximately 10 o'clock, and I am interviewing Albert Kamenicky by telephone interview. I am located at the General Land Office, and he is at his home. The interview is in support of the Voice of Veterans Program from the state of Texas Veterans Land Board. The purpose is to create a permanent record of military service experiences of veterans. Mr. Kamenicky, as you know, I'm about to interview you relating to your military experiences. The interview is by telephone and I will be using a tape recorder to record this interview. The interview will be transcribed and made into a permanent record at the Veterans Land Board in Austin, Texas. Does the Veterans Land Board have your permission and consent to conduct this interview and to make it a part of the permanent records of the Veterans Land Board?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** You have that permission.

*OK. Now, basically the purpose of the interview is to record your recollections of your military experiences, especially during the World War II years. We will follow somewhat a question and answer format, but please feel free to expand on your answers and any, add anything that you think may be helpful in refreshing your recollections so that future generations will have the opportunity to know what it was like for you during your military life and know how those experiences have shaped your life since then. We will discuss your experiences in somewhat of a chronological sequence. We understand that some of your experiences may be difficult to discuss, and if so, you are free to limit the interview to the extent you are comfortable in relating those experiences. Do we understand all of that?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yes sir.

*OK. All right. We're gonna start off with the very basics and then proceed from there. And the first question would be would you give us your name and your present address?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** My name is uh, Albert Kamenicky, K-A-M-E-N-I-C-K-Y, and I live at uh, for the past 43 years at 3919 Little River Road in Temple, Texas, 76502.

*And you've lived at that same address for the last 43 years?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Ah, yes sir.

*Wow, that's great.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, I have lived here for 43 years in this particular house.

*OK. And do you mind telling us what your age is?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I'm going on 80, going 83. I was born in 1924 in February.

*OK, and could you uh, give us a little information about uh, your family uh, beginning with uh, your parents and, and where you were born?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** OK, I was, my parents were born here in this, in the uh, in the United States. My grandfather and grandmother come from the old country. When I say old country, I mean uh, Czechoslovakia and uh, my grandfather lived right on the border of Austria and uh, and Czechoslovakia, and in them days, they, they uh, had to go, when they was 18, they had to go into the military, so he come here in 19-, in uh, when he was uh, 17 years old, and grandmother come to this country at 3 years of age, and they lived here in uh, Brazoria County, Milam County and just were general farmers and agricultural workers for more than, one side of it; ginners and so forth later on in life.

*Were your parents born in the United States?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** My dad was born in Cameron and my mother was born in uh, I think in the West of, I say I think uh, she was born in um, Lower Milam County. She was on the farm there.

*So you're a full Texas family.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I'm this full Texas family, born and raised here.

*OK. Do you have any siblings, brothers or sisters?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I have, I had two uh, brothers. One of 'em died last February. Other brother was in my uh, Newport, Newport uh, this uh – it's in Oregon. I'm trying to think of it.

*Oregon, OK.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, in Oregon, Grants Pass, Oregon.

*Did any of your brothers spend any time in the military?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yes, uh, my brother was uh, my one that passed away last February, he was a Chief Warrant Officer, and then my other brother was uh, spent two years in the, in the uh, Marine Corps.

*Was that during the World War II era, or another time?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, right after, right after. They was too young. I was 17 and they was younger than I was.

*OK. The one that was a Chief Warrant Officer, what service was that?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** In the Army.

*In the Army?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*OK.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** He started out as a, just in the lower ranks and then kept on and -

*So you were the oldest son.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I was the oldest, yes.

*OK, and uh, before you entered the uh, military, what kind of education did you have, formal education?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I was uh, raised on the farm. We, everything was in other words hard work and, and everything like that that we had in them days, and uh, I went to several schools. All of 'em were uh, two and three-room schools with two and three teachers in 'em, never was the real, but we had good, we studied the true uh, type of a school. In other words, arithmetic and that. It wasn't like now, where they uh, vary from politics or things like that.

*Prior to entering the military, did you do any traveling away from the farm?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I never was uh, I was away, well, we lived at uh, Pettibone, in Milam County, and in Cameron, and uh, just around that area, and I got the chance once to go to San Antonio my senior trip, uh, high school trip that they make. We went to San Antonio to the zoo. Other than that, I uh, never was west of uh, Belton. I never did get a chance to be, to see the ocean or anything like that.

*So the furthest you were away from home prior to your military experience was San Antonio.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, San Antonio, we went there for a school trip, you know, in the senior year, and the, I, like I say, we didn't get very far from home them days. Might say within uh, well, I did go to, I take that back, I did go before the military, I went to Fort Worth a couple of times hauling cattle with my uncle, stockyards and back, but that was just a trip there and back. It wasn't no -

*And that was before the military.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, that's before we went in the military.

*So Fort Worth and San Antonio were the extent of your universe at the time you entered the military.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Say it again -

*Fort Worth and San Antonio were the extent of your universe...*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yes. Yeah that's, like I say, them days we was just what they called poor dirt farmers, and uh, we just didn't, didn't travel very much in them days.

*What kind of responsibilities did you have on the farm for yourself?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I was naturally being the oldest boy, I would be doing whatever dad uh, had us to do, you know, the chores and stuff from the time I was well, from 4 years old I

remember when it started, uh, picking cotton and the corn and the general farming. We was uh, dad always farmed uh, cotton farm in other words. And uh, then later on, well, I grew up bigger, well I always got more, more uh, chores to do and whatever.

*What was the size of the farm? How many acres would you - ?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, we had, at first we was uh, what we called uh, renter crop at  $\frac{3}{4}$ , you know, your thirds and fourths, different uh, there'd be 120 to – round 100 acres. Some of them were a little bit less, but we moved about every two years, and whenever we cleaned up a place, well that's when the landlord would come up and say well, I think I'm gonna move on this place. It looks pretty good now.

*So it wasn't your place. You kind of like leased it to –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, you rented it, rented on thirds and fourths. In other words, third of the cotton and a fourth of the feed.

*I assume that was a pretty rough life.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** It was uh, well it was always short of money. It never did have anything. I never, when I went, went to school and then when they started bringing in the, getting these little notebooks and stuff like that, well I very seldom was ever able to go ahead and get those same books that a lot of the kids in school had, and uh, so I studied, but the main thing, when I first started at school my first uh, primer grade, I did not know how to speak not one word of English, and in other words I was, we was from a Czech family. That's all that was ever spoken at home and therefore I never did know we moved into this area that was, there was no Czechs in it, which was only about uh, well in them days you had what they call uh, circles of Germans, you had circle of, over here you had a little community of uh, Czechs, then you had a community of American, and then Spanish or whatever. But they, you know, in other words they was individualized like.

*So until you entered school, you didn't speak English.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I did not know English, no, but uh, I started school and after the uh, first couple of days and found out that me and the teacher could not understand one another, well I, I got real angered, disgusted with it, and I told my mama, I said uh, and she told me I had to learn this English. I told her then, I says well, if I ever learn it, I'll never speak another word of uh, Czech again. And to this day, I have not ever – well, I done forgot it. I just did. In other words I don't, I can't carry a conversation in Czech at all.

*So once you learned English, you abandoned your Czech language.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yes, I did and, and I did it because of the fact that the way it was, you know, throwed to me and, and I was just ashamed of it. And I'll tell you there was not anybody that was ever discriminated against more than I was in, when I was in the first and second grade.

*Is that right? On what basis, because you couldn't speak the language?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well uh, they just, everybody, all the kids – it wasn't the teachers done very good. I had some of the most wonderful teachers and they, they was learnin' like I was

learnin'. They was learnin' my language and I was learnin' theirs, but uh, the kids, they, you'd uh, they'd call you every kind of a name in the book, and in other words, they were just mean.

*Because you didn't speak their language.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Because I didn't, they'd call me dummy and uh just, well, I can't even remember all them names they called, and every time I got a, they got away from where the teacher, where the teacher wasn't, well they'd go ahead and jump on me and try to whoop me, but my dad always said whenever we started school, you never start a fight, you never, and if you get in a fight in school or anything, when you get home, you're gonna get a whippin' again, and my dad was a disciplinarian and when we said something, he meant it, and I got many a good whippin's on a count of things I went up and done that I didn't know that I should not do.

*Was that treatment that you received, did that follow you throughout the educational process before you entered the military?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yes, I was uh, you talkin' about the discrimination?

*Yes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** After I got older and in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, well, they had bullies in school, you know, like they do now, and but I had uh, managed to, to uh, dispose of them with the way that I fought 'em. I didn't fight, I never fought 'em fair, but I didn't, I done 'em by not lettin' dad know anything about it, and so there I finally got rid of 'em. But uh, I, through school all after I got up in the higher grades, I was treated nice then. I mean you know, I was, I was one of them. But I went through five different schools. I went through Yarrowton School, then we moved to Fox School which was uh, on the Rogers Route. And uh, then, after that we moved to uh, on the Little River. We stayed there two years. Then we moved to North Alum, and then we finally, last one was we finally got a place that had 640 acres in it, 145 of it was in cultivation; reset of it was in pasture and Little River runnin' through it. Well, that was our, that's to this day that's my pride and joy to be able to go around there and see that uh, place.

*So your family moved around quite a lot then.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yes. We had, every two years, every three years until the final in 19 and 35, well, that's when we got this place.

*Then you stayed there.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** So we got the chance to be there.

*So how old were you when you entered the military?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I uh, graduated from uh, first time I graduated was from Adhall, in uh, 19 and 40, and uh -

*Was that high school?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** High school, yes.

*What was the name of it again?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Uh, Adhall Community School.

*Adhall?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** A-D-H-A-L-L. And then we uh, after I graduated from there, well I was, wanted, I told uh, that I wanted to go to uh, A&M. Well, come to find out that I didn't take trig and geometry and in this school, so that disqualified me. So convinced daddy and mama and I convinced daddy to let me go post graduate to Buckholt, which was uh, finally that particular year that I was gone, went there, was the day made that a full-fledged high school, and they uh, so I went to Buckholt School, and it was altogether different. It had eight teachers and a superintendent and all that, and a good many more kids, and so it was a different experience. So anyway, we uh, I went there and again, I didn't take, I found out that I wasn't gonna get a chance, dad told me, he said you're not going to A&M or any other college. He said I'll teach you everything you need to know. Well, all right then. I wasn't gonna go to college. I says well, I'll just start thinkin' about something else. And I went to and we went uh, to uh, to, I went to the superintendent after about halfway through this school and through this last grade, and uh, them, them days uh, even though that I started like I did, I managed to jump one grade. In other words I, I was promoted from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, not uh, like all the rest of the kids had to do even though they knew how to speak English, they had to go 1, 2, 3. So anyway in the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade was my postgraduate year. Well then I went and uh, talked to the superintendent and him and I, we, I decided well, even though I can't go to college, I can go to the Navy, and that's what I kind of wanted to go fly, but I, so I just studied for that and here we go.

*You chose the Navy, is that what you chose?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, yeah.

*And that was in 1940?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** 19 and 41.

*1941?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, this was the, see '40 is when I graduated from the uh, school, and then that one year made '41.

*OK. So you uh, that would have been what, in the early part of '41, or - ?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I graduated in '41, was May the 27<sup>th</sup> was my graduation on my diploma. And then uh, I went and on June the 2<sup>nd</sup>, uh, June the 20<sup>th</sup>, not 2<sup>nd</sup>, June the 20<sup>th</sup> which was 29<sup>th</sup> of May to June the 20<sup>th</sup>, I was already in uh, Houston, by uh, had joined the Navy, before my dad even knew anything about it.

*Were you 18 at that time?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, 17. 17, I was -

*How did you sign up without your dad's consent?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Hah?

*How did you end up signing up without your dad's consent?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, I went their without, I had to get his consent later on, but my mother, she knew what was going on, but she wouldn't tell, she didn't tell him because of the friction we had between me – he told one of the guys that tried to sell him a tractor one time, he said well, I got a boy that's we gonna have here on the farm. He said he can follow them mules and uh, do uh, a lot of the work that I've been doing. Well, that -

*You decided otherwise.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** That didn't fit my plans. Well, and at that time, uh, we would get uh, well he didn't pay us anything. He didn't have the money a lot of times, and we would go ahead and, and uh, and uh, he'd give me a quarter on the weekend. We'd get to go to movies which was 10 cent and popcorn was 10 cents and soda water and that was it.

*So you decided for the military to avoid continually working on the farm and rather meager wages.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Get a better life and uh, get a better education, that's what I was really -

*Why did you choose the Navy over the other services?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, I had some cousins that was in the Army and I didn't uh, exactly like the way they had to do, or they explained to me, you know, what all they, and at that time, the Navy was very restrictive and so I just thought well, they got better schools and better chance on advancement and that's the reason I took it.

*At that time, this was in around May or June of 1941, Europe was two years already into the Second World War –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, they was in, in the war, yeah.

*And there were some, there had to have been some very uh, grave concerns about being involved in a war with Japan because of what was going on.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*How did those matters affect your decision about going into the military?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I never did, we didn't uh, I never did think about that so much as, as just thinking I said well, if I get into the Navy, and that, or if I get rejected, I knew that we was going to be drafted in the following year, uh, and be drafted to the Army, so I still had a year, you know, leeway in there, so I did uh, think about it, but I -

*You knew you were gonna have to go somewhere anyway –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Somewhere or another, yeah.



*So \_\_\_\_ by trying a little early, you'd get your own choice.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, dad didn't think too much about that. You know, he wasn't worried about the war so much, but well, he had never thought about me being one of 'em to have to go.

*Yes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And I do know one thing, that lots of the guys that did go later on in the Army from here got, waited 'til they got drafted, uh, they're not with us anymore. There's a lot of 'em got in that early Army, with you know, was a whole lot more dangerous than later on.

*Yes. So you joined the Navy and where did you go for your basic training?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I went to San Diego, California. I went to Houston first and, and uh, took the old, then we got sent to uh, San Diego, California, and then uh, that was uh, the, supposed to have been eight uh, twelve weeks of schoolin', of boot camp, but we dropped it down, or they dropped it down to uh, eight weeks, and uh, first thing I knew I was through, then have to come back on boot leave for a couple of days, and uh, which I had to watch my money and everything because I didn't have any, hardly any money to come back. But of course them days, they didn't, the uh, take you home from Diego to – from California to Texas was uh, was not very much for you know, one in uniform.

*Basic training, moving from the farm to being involved in such a complex arrangement of people must have been a lot to waken up your eyes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** It was a very, very in training cause the fact that I was always 6 foot 1 and a half inches tall, which I was even to this day when I look at some of the school pictures, I'm always at least a head higher than all the other people in my \_\_\_\_.

*That was tall for those days. That was tall for 1941.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, that was whole size tall, and uh, by being that tall is the only reason that I got to play a little bit of basketball because the coach said well, you're tall enough, you can set there in the middle and just hold your hands way up in the air and they can't touch you, because he was 6 foot 2 inches tall, him and I were, and so, but anyway, in the college, I mean in the boot camp there, that was another rude awakening because you know, they have everything a certain way, and you didn't try to change it, and I learned that right quick, and I learned that whenever somebody told me somethin', you do it their way and then if there was another way of doing it, you talked it over with 'em. You didn't go ahead and do it your way and then try to bluff your way through.

*Did you find boot camp beneficial to your training?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yes, I've had a, they pushed it fast and they, you know, it was uh, it was really somethin' different and uh, like you say, if me being tall, I was put in as a squad leader right off the bat, in boot what they call a, boot camp squad leader. And so I had one of the squads that give me 15 men that I had to more or less take care of, or, or well, like I always call, we always said well, here comes the hen with her chicks. And uh, those 15 men that was under me, in my uh, squad, we was uh -

*What were some of the difficult things that you had to deal with in boot camp? If you can remember you found particular difficulty with?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, my most of it is because I did not take that geometry and trig in, in schools, and I thought I'd get away with it, but everything in the Navy and everything after the Navy later on, uh, always wound up you needin' to know somethin' about trig or geometry or in other words, somethin' in math, and that was uh, I always had to go back and really, I went to study math and uh, on my own, you know, correspondent-wise, and -

*But this was after you were out of boot camp.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, well in, even in boot camp, I, I was able to, to study uh, a whole lot on that. Some of the other guys would uh, that was in there helped me out, or they helped, we helped each other, and they helped me with that math, you know, they'd, startin' out in it, you know what, geometry and trig that can be awful touchy. Of course I was good in algebra and I was good in math, but I just didn't take that trig and that geometry.

*What are the things you missed most from civilian life when you found yourself in the military?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, not really, well being with my brothers, to be honest about it, was the biggest part of it, and then we've had that, the Little River run through our place. We used to go down there and every time we got a chance to get off, we went fishin' and uh, then uh, hunting. In winter time, we did a lot of, quite a bit of hunting of course, and hides and stuff, you know, pelts, uh, skinning animals like possum and that.

*Did you join up with any of your friends or did you do it by yourself?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** In the, at home you talkin' about?

*Yeah, when you -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah we had, I had neighbor there, there was two of 'em in there. My brother and, and them, them two boys, well, we had, that's when we was four of us, and then I had two cousins that we uh, whenever they got a chance to come over, well then, there was six of us.

*But did any of those friends or relatives join the Navy with you?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No.

*Go to boot camp with you?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, I was the first one to leave uh, see this was six months before uh, Pearl Harbor, actually.

*Right.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And uh, I was the first one to leave uh, Milam County to go into the military out of my class or my school or my people that was around me, in any of the schools.

And uh, even though the uh, like I say, I went to Buckholt. Some of them went to Adholt, some of 'em went to the other one, but all of us uh, they all stayed home and were, like I say, were drafted later on and, and uh, I was the first one to leave that, and uh, in other words I did, it was just sort of a hush-hush deal. Got in with the superintendent and, and he took me to Austin.

*After boot camp, any other recollections or experiences of boot camp that stick out in your memory that you'd like to share?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, I had one, one deal that I was kind of odd and it was real uh, funny. I uh, left Austin, got down to Austin to, you know, when they gutted, had it stepped up all the way to Austin to Houston, then to boot camp. Well, I got down to Austin and the guy there that was going to the military, so him and I, we left Austin together to go to Houston, and when he got to Houston, he decided he was gonna go into the Marine Corps. Well, I was going Navy. Well, after we got all of the shots and, and uh, exams and everything, when they put us on, well, they said well you're going to uh, Camp Pendleton, and they told me I was going to boot camp there to San Diego, Navy training station. Well, they wasn't too far apart, but that meant that him and I, even though we just uh, recent friends, we uh, kind of stayed together and helped one another to get by, and, and whenever we got to uh, Diego, I bid him goodbye and the same with him. And we didn't figure we'd ever see one another again. Well, after boot camp, I was put on a ship, uh, on, I got transferred to Hawaii to the U.S.S. Phoenix. Well, I first asked for the U.S.S. Houston, you know, you get a choice of three ships you want to go to. Well, I asked for the U.S.S. Houston, and uh, then I asked for the U.S.S. Phoenix and then the U.S.S. Boise, which were all cruisers. I wanted to get in with uh, a bunch that wasn't the biggest ship in the fleet, but I didn't want to go in one of them uh, destroyers, because I uh, was told how those things that they're in the air or under the sea half the time, whichever half they in. And I found out later on that they really were, and to this day I still say that, that uh, we call 'em a tin can sailor, which was the destroyer, that they should've get flight pay and submarine pay both ways because if they wasn't flyin', if they wasn't in the air, uh, over these waves, well they was uh, diggin' 'em a hole through the water, and the only thing you could see of it was the mast.

*So did they give you your choice of ships to go on while you were in boot camp?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yes, that, that was right at the, at the graduation time, they did, yes. They uh, they put it like that. They give you a, a sort of a choice, if it was a spot open. I asked for the U.S.S. Houston which was in China Sea, and in China, and like I'll tell you later on, thank God that I didn't get on it because I'd a been a prisoner. But anyway, uh, they give you a choice of, of sort of so they'd kind of feel you out. They didn't mean they gonna let you have it, but and I forget even when I asked for the third one, but that was Boise, yeah, which was two uh, two uh, cruisers were just alike.

*So you were assigned a ship as soon as you got out of -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yes, uh-huh.

*...of boot camp.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I left, when I left boot camp, well I didn't know I was going to the Phoenix.

*So did they send you to an advanced school or anything before that?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, I didn't make uh, advanced school. I, some of 'em, the guys in there that, that uh, had some like radio and that wanted to go to radio school, they got a chance to, but most of those schools were, were uh, not uh, available to me. In other words, I wasn't uh, I wasn't askin' for the schools that had room for 'em.

*So right out of boot camp, you went aboard ship.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, I went on the U.S.S. Tippecanoe, and on the Tippecanoe well, which was an old oiler, oil tanker, and 9 knots, which is 9 miles \_\_\_ a fraction over 9 miles per hour, from San Diego to – this was from Los Angeles because they was in, you know, they sent us up there by bus – and uh, to uh, Pearl Harbor -

*At 9 miles an hour –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** At 9 miles an hour, so you can figure it, that that, we had a lot of time to scrape that \_\_\_, that deck and everything and repaint it as long as the weather was halfway decent, and uh, in other words, a boat sailor, he can depend on one thing, that in his right hand was gonna be a brush and in his left hand was gonna be a pail of OD paint, and a scraper, and that uh, regardless of which ship you went on, you was just for further transfer, you was just a hired hand that they, they could grab and use.

*So you joined the Phoenix in Hawaii.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** In Hawaii, yeah.

*And that was about when?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I didn't get on her 'til uh, she come back from the Phillippines and in September.

*September 1941.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** In '41, yeah. Well, I had from September uh, October and November, and uh, December, then 7 days in December. But that's how long I was aboard ship, and I was assigned to a division there, uh, deck division, and naturally everything, everywhere you went then you was, you was studyin' something.

*Let's talk a little about the Phoenix. That was a fairly new ship.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** It was about uh, christen-, uh, launched in 1938, which was a you might say almost a new ship, and -

*Which there weren't that many of in the Navy at that time.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Sir?

*There were not that many new ships in the Navy at that time.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, there, yeah, there was uh, about, well they had about 10 or 12 at that time. There was six of these uh, cruisers that was just alike that was goin' in, one behind the other, but they was buildin' up the Navy fast, and that's the reason that uh, it was a little bit easier to get in the Navy than it had uh, say three or four years before then, because uh, the guys that was three or four years older than me, they didn't get a chance at the Navy like I did.

*In terms of ships of the line, the cruiser was kind of between a battleship and a destroyer, is that right?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yes sir, that's, uh, well your destroyer's around 345, 250 foot long, or thereabouts. There some difference in, in the lengths. But uh, my cruiser was 608 foot long.

*And a battleship would be what, maybe 800?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** The battleship would be about, around 500-600 feet, but it was a whole lot wider, and uh, it, it was the armament is what counted, and the armament on this cruiser was 6-inch, uh, 45 uh, main battery, had 15 guns and 5 turrets, and then it had uh, antiaircraft. We had 8 antiaircraft, 5-inch, 25's on it. And so that was a, that was that, but on uh -

*And so the 6-inch guns are what we call the turret guns.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, turret guns.

*They turned around on a turret and there were what, 3 up front, two -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** 3 up front, and 2 in the rear, aft to park, and uh, see they would be, the three guns would be in one turret, so that made it 15 guns in all.

*Yes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** So they uh, let's see, what, that-a-way, uh, the battleships, uh, they had, they were different armaments. Some of them had 3 turrets and them that, most of all your battleships were old. That was like the U.S.S. Texas down here and uh, Houston or San Jacinto, and those kind, and but, they were still, you know, they was usable and all, and they used 'em to do -

*Your ship also carried aircraft, didn't it?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah. We had, uh, 2 observation aircraft that we could put out at any time. Then we had 2 more that were put together, but they was kept down in the deck, you know, in case of need. And then we had uh, 2 more that was in crates, uh, stored in crates in the hangar. So we had, actually we had 6 OS2U's, uh, aboard ship at first. Then later on, uh, in the later years, 1943, they changed from OS2U's to SOC's as they called 'em.

*SOC's?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, Scout Observation Planes.

*One of 'em was called a Kingfisher, wasn't it?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Uh, well yeah, I think they called some of 'em that. We called 'em uh, SOC's, because that's what they call Scouts -

*And their purpose was to be the eyes for the fleet.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, we had, we'd send 'em up for, well the pilot would spot for us, and during the war, we had some pilots that, hell they'd take uh, 200-lb. bombs and hang it on each one of your wings, and uh, if they caught a submarine out there, and it happened to be on the surface, they'd bomb him just like the fighter planes did and other ones. And uh, of course they had uh, the pilot and the radioman, and that radioman had a 30-caliber machine gun, uh, on or right behind him which he used.

*How many people would be on that size ship?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** On the ship itself?

*Yeah.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Uh, peace time Navy was uh, 840, and uh, then after the war started, we had uh, 1,204 men and officers.

*1,200?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** 1,200 men and officers.

*That's a lot of people on a 600-foot ship.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I uh, laugh about it many times. Some of them that uh, never been on board a ship that you know, to see it, uh, they say well, where did you sleep? Well, we had compartments and in those compartments, which was uh, that my ship was 60-foot from one side to the other. In other words, the beam was 60-foot. Well, you take uh, 20-foot of that, and put 58 people in one deck.

*It was pretty crowded.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Hah?

*That's pretty crowded.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, what you done, you had bunks and there was 8 to this rack of, of bunks would be on expansion, but I'm talking about expansion it would be uh, those uh, oh, what the heck they call it, here like our cots are now that you use going to fishin' or somethin', and they would be 4 of them, and in places 5, one on top of the other, and they was exactly - if you, if you got up on your side and uh, on your, rolled on your right or left side, and you was pretty good sized, and the other guy on top was pretty heavy, well first thing you know you was only but had about 2, maybe, maybe 3 inches that, that's all he lacked, because that, his weight would bring the springs down, you know.

*Not a lot of privacy.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** There wasn't a lot of privacy. And then whenever you uh, got out of that, all 5 of 'em jump off of that one rack, well, you'd jump right on top of somebody's head, if they, you know, especially on general quarters or somethin' like that you didn't mess around. You'd, you'd hit the deck and you grabbed your shoes out of your locker and uh, your pants was, put 'em on the run, and that's for that, and you'd take 58 people tryin' to get out of a, a hole, uh, what they call uh, the uh, I don't remember the name of that now, in other words out of the hatch, that's what – and uh, try to get out of that hatch, and I mean you would scoot and there'd be somebody pushin' you all the way. That was, that's like I say, there's a lot of room, but it also was enough room. I mean you know, you, you learned to live tight.

*The food, how was the food?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Hah? Food on my ship was uh, there couldn't have been any better because we had uh, cooks that was on there for a couple of three years, well, from the time that the ship was commissioned, they was one of the plank corners as they call 'em. The plank corner is the one that goes aboard ship as it is launched, you know, in other words, brand new. And we had uh, guys on there that they could take, well, what we call the old, oleo, I don't know if you've ever heard that, but they'd take that old oleo or that uh, powdered milk and uh, they'd go around and get a few pennies here and a few pennies there, which uh, Navy, you only made \$18 a month, and uh, half of that was taken away from you by, for your personal stuff that you had to have. Well, they'd go ashore whenever they'd go ashore, they'd buy uh, these little condiments that the Navy didn't issue, and like that uh, powdered milk, they would uh, mix that in a way, by golly I, I was raised on a farm that had a lot of milk and we drank a lot of milk, and I liked it. In other words it was, and very few people that, and then you know, in other words they, they done a little extra. Every time they got a chance and they got uh, had a little extra money in their little kitty that they kept, which we kept puttin' in, you know, every time, every time we got a chance, well they would uh, buy some extra flour or extra sugar and these two bakers that we had on there, they would bake uh, cookies and stuff like that, something that the, most Navy people never even saw about or never heard about. But we had, our cooks were good.

*OK. All right now, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. You got there about June? Of 1941?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Did I get to Hawaii?

*Yes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, I got to Hawaii, it was in September.

*September, OK. So September is when you arrived.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*Now was Hawaii at that time considered to be great duty station? Bad duty station?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, uh, yeah it was a good, it was a good for us because we didn't have any money so we couldn't, we really couldn't go nowhere and uh, they'd let you went to town if you walked around town, be three or four people get together and walk around town, and see uh, whatever they could, whatever the civilian population could uh, dig up, hold out like they do now, you know, for the -

*When you got there, you were only a few months away from the outbreak of the war.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*What was it like over there? Were people thinking about or coming more? Were they thinking about potential uh, problems for Pearl Harbor?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, uh, no they was not. Well they, I guess the uh, seniors were, but uh, we was uh, being trained, you know, and all of our, how to, general quarters and all that, how to fire. We went out to sea after I got on that in September. Well uh, we uh, replenished everything that whenever they come back from uh, Philippines, well we replenished everything. We was naturally working parties was one of the things you, you dang sure gonna have, and so we replenished all the, uh, food, fuel and, and supplies, and we went, we went back out to sea, uh, for maneuvers, and in the north of uh, there, and uh, in these maneuvers, they was, you know, going through all their tactics of maneuvering. I guess uh, they'd divide a whole lot like you would on a football field, you know, just uh, they'd make up something and then see if the other side could figure out what was gonna happen. And so we went there and we stayed out at sea I guess uh, 8 or 10 days, and we happened to run across – this was the first time that, that for instance I was out in a, or those that went on board ship with me, that's the first time we was out at sea for maneuvers, and so we was learnin' things, and we was goin' along there and uh, it come up what they call a undersea uh, what the heck they call it. In other words it's a, your sea starts turning over, and you would have a mountainous type of waves.

*Like a tsunami?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well it was, it was uh, more or less if it was right next to the beach, yes they would be a tsunami. But uh, this was way out in the, you know, out in the open sea, and uh, those battleships, they'd be in line with uh, well, cruisers in there and destroyers and everything. Well, you'd be lookin' over there at uh, at the battleship, and first thing you know it'd just disappear. It would go down into it and uh, we'd look and look, and say, and I thought several times, I said well is that son of a gun gonna go down and stay there or is it comin' back up? And of course we was doin' the same thing. But see, these waves, the top crest of these waves were maybe half a mile apart. Well, from the top of this one, because the bottom of the uh, way it uh, went, would be 300 or 400 feet. You know, they was uh, real deep. It done was just this uh, big old waves and so in other words, I actually should say that the waves were around 300 feet tall at the crest, at the top. But uh, here they'd come back out and uh, we'd be settin' – of course you had to be real careful not to get washed overboard and all that, and where I was, well I could see this uh, battle wagon alongside us and he would disappear, and first thing you know, his bow you could see underneath his bow when he was comin' up on this wave. You could see way back underneath there, almost to the bridge. And then whenever he'd break over to, to take his plunge, well then his propellers would be out there just like an airplane propellers.

*Wow. Now what were you being trained to do at this time?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well uh, we was mostly deck hands and uh, handlin' of ammunition and handlin' of uh, of uh, that, my uh, general quarters station was uh, down in, in the 5<sup>th</sup> floor or 5<sup>th</sup> deck down in the uh, magazine. I was a, a powder handler, and uh, of course, this, if I had to go down there now, I don't know if I would go or not.



*Why is that?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, you know, claustrophobia. But at that time we never thought, and uh -

*When you say a powder room, what was that?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** That uh, that's where they kept uh, say for the 6-inch guns, turrets, each turret had a powder room, and uh, that had the ammunition on the 6-inch uh, 45, was semi what they call a, it wasn't a bullet and the powder wasn't together. You know, so you had this powder -

*The shell was separate and the powder was in like a big bag.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And uh, no, it was in a, it was in a cylinder on the, on the cruiser. Now on the, on a battle wagon, it was in bags. You'd throw three or four. This one you just used one, one cylinder of powder with a shell in front of it, and uh, you'd be in the shell room or the powder room, whichever one you was assigned to, but it was down there 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> deck.

*Did the Phoenix have a forced air system?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** A what?

*Forced air system?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, it was uh, more or less like that. Sometime it kind of caught down. It was whole lot of ammonia smell and down in that uh, in that ammunition rooms, and that was one of the things that, they kept us out of there as much as they could, but you know, whenever you had to be sending that powder up, actually you was down 5 decks below, well you was 4 decks below the water line.

*Did you ever have on any of these maneuvers before uh, the attack on Pearl Harbor, did you have any live fire exercises?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh, yeah, yeah, they fired uh, almost every time ever – well out of those 10 days that we was out there on that uh, maneuver, I think they fired at least 6 or 7 days of that.

*Do you remember your first time hearing it?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh God yeah, that thing just, it'd just blow your ears out almost.

*Did it shake the ship?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah, it, it'd jar it. It kind of jar it like, but see you would be shootin' sideways, I mean sideways, to uh, broadside most of the time, so very seldom would you uh, actually uh, it wouldn't be what they call it a, a kickback like a shotgun or something, and uh, but uh, it would, it would uh, knock it, and then again, they would fire three guns or at a time, or sometimes just one, one, two and three, you know, on a turret.

*Did they have a strong smell and odor when they fired?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah, yeah. You had, that was that ammonia that was uh, so bad.

*Did it burn you? Burn your eyes, burn your throat?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** If you was uh, in down where that uh, smoke would come, if you was on the main deck, you really got it. But most of the, most of the uh, smoke and stuff from those shells and stuff when you was firing would be on the outside. It'd blow to the outside.

*As you were getting closer, closer to the attack on Pearl Harbor, your general duties were still deck hand and uh – powder room operations?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** After I got in uh, let's see, that was in September, I was uh, on working parties and in uh, December the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, yeah, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, I was lucky enough to get what they call uh, rest leave, and they took us to -

*Sorry, what kind of leave was that?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Rest leave.

*Rest leave.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, in other words, we, we weren't on leave, but we was uh, we was taken to a, a park on the opposite side of the island, uh, from Pearl Harbor back on the, in about 15, 18 miles over there to the – the Navy had a, a setup over there that uh, they'd take a bunch of guys and just let 'em lounge around. They had 24-hour day place to eat or sleep or whatever they wanted to do, or they didn't have to do nothin' for three days and three nights. So anyway, I got a chance to get at that from the uh, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> of December. Well, after that, we come back and naturally working 40. I was still a seaman, second class, and so when you're a seaman, well you're on working parties 100 percent of the time. We was loadin' different things on the ship and then when we got through with that, well we went and, and I was on a workin' party on the U.S.S. Arizona, and uh, we was puttin' these uh, which was a battleship, and uh, we was puttin' this uh, shells and powder on it. We had about 5 or 6 of those uh, dago, well they called 'em lighters, to carry that stuff, you know, in other words they'd load stuff and then push a tub -

*This was about how many days before the attack?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** On the uh, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> – let's see, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, I – 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> – in other words, the day before. We got -

*So the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> you were working on the Arizona?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** On the Arizona, uh-huh.

*Loading ammunition.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And rolling that ammunition and we, we loaded 275 bags of that powder on there, and uh, naturally the uh, lighter or barge as I should call it, most people would call it a barge, they uh, it carried that much of that powder and we'd roll it off of there, and let's see, each one of those bags would be 14 inches in diameter because that's what the guns were.

*These were for their main guns.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** For their main guns, yeah. And they, they had, well there was a bunch of us, whole crews of the Arizona and then we had uh, about 15, 15 or so of us, and then there was other ships that sent. In other words, it was a big project.

*So just, just before the attack you were working on the Arizona.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, that was the next day is whenever it, in other words, 6<sup>th</sup> we got through on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and we uh, went back to our ship, and we'd always go back to ship, our ship at night, you know.

*So Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1941, you were aboard the Arizona loading -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Loading that uh, loading the ammunition and -

*The ammunition magazines.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And the powder -

*Powder from the shore.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And uh, I, I was standin' there talkin' to the uh, gunnery officer, and uh, this uh, Arizona, it's uh, you know, the way it's built, it's a kind of a, went into a point on this uh, rear end, or the aft, had it \_\_\_ uh, was uh, kind of uh, you know, the shape of it I'm talkin' about. Well, on there they have what they call screw guards. The screw guard on that uh, on that Arizona is a big pipe that, that goes way out away from the ship. That's to protect the screws that's underneath it, you know, whenever they'd uh, it was twin screw -

*Yeah, these are about the water line or just below the water line?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** That uh, that protector was about 2 foot above the water line. And uh, that, anyway, when that barge went up against it, well it knocked a hole in the side of that, of the uh, Arizona's uh, above the armor plate, you know, in other words on the side. It knocked a hole in it. \_\_\_ I says, told the uh, gunnery officer, I says man, I said, I hope that, that thing has got a little bit more life than that. I said you know, uh, just a little bitty bump from the barge and he says, nah, he says, that thing is, he just went above the uh, armor belt. He said we'll have that fixed in a little while. Anyway I told him, I said well, I'm hopin' that, that uh, and then I asked him, I says, I wonder what it'd be like if the sea, if all this powder blow, blow up here? He turned around and he says, you wouldn't be here to see it. So -

*Little did he know the next day -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Sir?

*Little did he know it would be the next day.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, little did he know. Then sure enough next day, when I got up and I was goin' to go up out of the hatch -

*OK, well let's hold up on that a second because we want to get that, but we want to get it kind of chronologically as we move there. This is still the 6<sup>th</sup>. You're working on the Arizona, loading ammunition and what have you. At that time was there a feeling among, and I don't mean the big shots on the island and so forth, I mean amongst the enlisted men, any sense of foreboding that anything was coming?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, not really.

*You were looking for an easy day on Sunday.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, we was, some of 'em was plannin', like myself, I was plannin' on going over to the church and, and then goin' on the island to uh, walk around, you know, in the parks and stuff, which we usually done on Sunday is about all you had to do except go to some bar and get drunk, and I wasn't in that line, so it was just a matter of finding something to do. It wasn't no, there wasn't no such thing as, as a bunch of girls there, because those that were there were some, some wives of some of the crews.

*OK, so this was, this was Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, and uh, you finished your work on the Arizona?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, we finished it about, about noon, and the gunnery officer told us, says well, thanked all of us and he says I want ya'll all to come on follow me down to the mess hall and by gone, they set us up a steaks and uh, well regular, regular meal of, and had those real steaks, which the -

*So you had a steak dinner aboard the Arizona the day before it blew up.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, and uh, I, I kind of, I was always one to kind of mention something and I said something to one of the petty officers, I said well, I guess the officers are not gonna eat steak tonight because we done got it for 'em, and they all laughed about it. The gunnery officer overhead it and he said, nah, he said they got enough for us. Like that, you know. But anyway we went and he uh, recommended, he wrote a letter and give it to the man in charge of us and I took it back to the captain, thanked him for the, for our work and all, and recommended that we get the rest of the day off, and uh, let us go to town or whatever. So I did. I, me and my buddy, we decided well, didn't have anything else to do and not any money to do it with to start with, and like I say, it was nothing more than going out there and going to get good and drunk. You could do that because there was plenty of bars and a few other places that you could spend your money, but I didn't believe in that.

*So on the evening of December 6<sup>th</sup>, after you finished your work on the Arizona and left, you went ashore?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, we -

*Did you go back to Phoenix first, change clothes and things such as that?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*And then you went ashore.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And then we went ashore. We said we'd, had to change uniforms to go ashore.

*So the last, the last day of peace uh, you uh, you spent it on uh, in where, Pearl Harbor or did you go into - ?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** We went into Honolulu.

*Into Honolulu?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*And do you remember what you did?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, we walked around and uh, like I say, we done saw that we hadn't uh, saw the shows that they had there, so I didn't uh, want to go to no show, so we walked and uh, got me later on about 5 o'clock or so, we went ahead and got us a hamburger apiece, which was uh -

*This was 5 o'clock in the evening?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, in the evening. We had our dinner, you know, early and so I wasn't really hungry, but I knew that we wasn't gonna get back to the ship in time to eat uh, chow at the uh, supper as they called it. But anyway, uh, I went and bought a, one of them pillowcases that had Honolulu and stuff, the silk, you know, and I, this girl in there uh, was gonna send, I was gonna send it back to my mother, and uh, no, she says no, you don't have to pay. You just put your address on there. Said we'll send it to her and I'll pay for the shipping and all. So that cost us a dollar and a quarter for that pillowcase, and so I bought that and that uh -

*The night before.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** She sent it on to my mother, and you mentioned a while ago about uh, whether we uh, kind of suspicion or anything. Well I would say yes and no to that, but at the same time, I did write a letter, and I wrote, I was writin' mom and dad, and I did say in that letter that, that probably before they got the letter or after they got the letter, whichever, I said we would probably be in a war.

*When did you write that letter?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** On the, on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

*On the 6<sup>th</sup>, that evening?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** But uh, well it actually on the 5<sup>th</sup>, whenever at night time.

*What made you think that you would be war by the time they got the letter?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I don't know. It wasn't, whether it was a feelin' or what, but it, it wasn't uh, what you would call direct. In other words it wasn't a permanent feeling. It was just a sort

of a thought of uh, fleeting as they call it, fleeting thought, and uh, I don't know. I have uh, I have that every once in a while when something's gonna happen, I kind of get a feelin' of something may happen, not knowing what it's gonna be, but -

*But you didn't, your thoughts weren't that it was gonna happen right there in Pearl Harbor.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, no not -

*You might be in war by the time they got the letter -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** By the time they got the -

*You were probably thinking maybe the Philippines or some -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, well, you know, in other words, we would be involved in which we were not involved in the European war at that time, but that's what I kinda figured, well I guess that I had the feelin' would be that we would be, declare war on somebody, which was uh, that was sort of a fleeting deal between people all the time in them days, where there was a top, top brass or the, or the seamen on there.

*So you then, uh, what time did you go back to the ship on the 6<sup>th</sup>?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I, we went back just about 6:30 or 7 o'clock.

*OK, still fairly early evening.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah, it was still, still uh, light, and I never did, all the time that I was in Hawaii, I never, never stayed ashore after dark because I just didn't uh, you know, you feel that you uh, more comfortable at home. And we was all still recruits and, and like I say, only three, three or four months out of uh, out of boot camp and -

*And the Phoenix was your home.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And it was a home and, and when you didn't have any money whatsoever and \_\_\_\_, you know, \$18 don't go very far when it takes \$6.40 for insurance and, and \$5 for your uh, what they call the tick book, that uh, that uh, got tickets in there to uh, for you to buy uh, toothpaste and stuff like that, you know. So that don't leave you very much money.

*So that was the cheap route. You go back to the ship, sleep on the ship and eat on the ship.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, well and another thing, too, uh, if you uh, a seaman, he couldn't stay, he had to be back aboard ship by midnight anyhow. And uh, that approximately the entire crew had to except the officers and the chiefs.

*So the night of the 6<sup>th</sup>, you go aboard, and what towards 6:30, 7 o'clock at night.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, about that, it was nearly sundown.

*And you had no duties the next day.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, uh, the next day was uh, my uh, day off as they called it day off.

*Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> was your day off.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*And you had planned to go into town.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I had uh, I was uh, I dressed myself and uh, well you know, put on a uniform and Class A uniform which was the whites, and uh, with a, with your black tie, uh, black kerchief as they called it, and uh, I was going to the U.S.S. California which was the Catholic uh, church.

*This was Sunday morning?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah.

*OK so, but let's stay with the rest of December 6<sup>th</sup>. About 7 o'clock or so you were finished, you were back on ship. Did you go to bed early? Did you stay up late?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, we messed around there 'til well, lights out in our department was usually around 9 o'clock, 9:30. And it all depends on how many people or who they were in there, but I always went to bed pretty early.

*So the next morning, you uh, when you got up you were planning to go to church.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, that's right.

*Aboard the U.S.S. California.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, California. See they had the churches uh, on each one of the big battle wagons because they was way, they was tied up, they could get to 'em, and then they had the room and the uh, either the priest or the uh, preachers or whatever was on each one of 'em. Some of 'em had Baptist uh, services. Some of them had Protestant. Some of 'em had Catholic. And there was one that did have the Jewish uh, service, you know.

*So I have a map in front of me that shows where the Phoenix was uh, tied down at the time on December 7<sup>th</sup>, and you were up northeast of Ford Island. It looks like from where you were, you would have had a very clear view of battleship row.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah.

*Where all the big ships were, and you were planning on Sunday morning I guess to take what, some kind of a uh, small boat?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, they had motor launches.

*A motor launch from the Phoenix down to the California, which was actually the last battleship at battleship row.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Way out there on the end.

*Yes, and that was your plan.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, that was the plan there.

*OK, and uh, let's start now with the morning of December 7<sup>th</sup>. What time did you wake up, do you remember?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, it was about, well we always got up at 5 o'clock or 5:30 always did, and we, because that-a-way I could get the jump on and there wouldn't be four or five people jumpin' on my head off these bunks, and then uh, I got to the latrine naturally and uh, cleaned up and everything, and then uh, we went to eat. In other words, we had breakfast early and I'd always try to make the early line and that-a-way I didn't have to rush so much. Then whenever, of course this being Sunday, wasn't near as, a lot of the guys wouldn't even get up. They didn't care whether they went to eat or not. And a lot of -

*A lot of 'em were a little uh, hung over from the night before.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, that was Saturday that, so they wasn't exactly care whether they got up or not. But uh, and they was, most of 'em, most of the sailors one way or another would have something to eat on if they missed the chow here and there. We always managed to have a few little ditties hid away somewhere.

*OK so you had breakfast?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I went ahead, yeah, eat breakfast.

*That had to be about what time?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Around 7 o'clock.

*At 7 o'clock.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, that's, whenever I, you know, I got in there, maybe a little bit before and then got out of there.

*And what time were services to be?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** We was gonna leave the ship at 8 o'clock.

*At 8 o'clock. You were going to leave at 8 o'clock.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** They was gonna, see the boats would leave the ship at 8:00. We'd sign in and sign out in other words, sign out at uh, 8 o'clock and then that boat would take, would go along and if you was going to whichever ship you was going to, whatever services you're going to, they'd stop there.

*So it would stop at maybe a number of the battleships.*



**Albert Kamenicky:** Hah?

*It might stop at a number of the battleships depending upon what service you were going to.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** It all depends if you wanted to go to this service or that service. And then you'd be over, and also, uh, they had some uh, deals that they, that they did almost every Sunday, would be that if you had say a brother or you had some friends that you knew some friends, you could go over to their ship on a Sunday. That was a, that was allowed. I never did because I didn't have anybody over there. But uh, that was allowed and a lot of 'em, a lot of 'em had brothers over, you know, in another, in other words he was on say the Phoenix and the other one was on the, well, Miss Virginia for instance, and they'd, they'd visit one another. And that-a-way they -

*They would do that on Sunday.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, then they'd go ahead and uh, eat with, with uh, whichever ship they was on and it wasn't uh, charged against 'em. So that was another thing that was -

*So some of the people might have been going to church services, but some were also maybe going to visit their brothers -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah, just different things and then there was a lot of 'em later on was gonna go to back to town or you know, the ones that, they had to go nowhere Saturdays, well they was off on Sunday, well then that was a, you had every other day off. That was, that was what they called port and starboard watches, and if you was in the port watch, you had this day, and the next day you, you was in the starboard watch.

*So around 7:00, a little after 7:00, you were in your dress whites at breakfast?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I put on my dress whites and started up, naturally you know, you're kind of messin' around. I knew I had to be on the, on deck at the, the main deck to sign out at uh, 8 o'clock, and so I didn't try to get up there too quick because you have on your whites, and out there, you, you watch that real close because those things can get dirty quicker than anything you've ever seen.

*I can imagine, yes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** So anyway, I started up that hatch, and when I got up on top of the main deck, just right above the hatch, well that's whenever that airplane come over and uh, the first one that I saw, and they hit that Arizona, and all that powder you know I mentioned a while ago -

*That was put on two days ago -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** What happened if you saw that, well I saw it, I saw it get blowed up, all them 275 or so bags of powder that we handled the day before, well there is was right in my face, and I mean it knocked, well the concussion you know, uh, we was a pretty good ways from it, but its concussion come across there and, and I could still feel it. I mean it was -

*Some say it actually lifted the ship out of the water.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** The Arizona, it did, yeah it did lifted it up.

*That's amazing for something that huge.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And I mean it, well you probably seen the pictures of where the smoke and stuff, well it lifted it up. Well there was, I mention it here after, well it uh, whenever she blew up, that was uh, right at one of the first ones to do it because they was hit by one of the first planes.

*You saw the plane itself?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah, yeah, it flew, I saw there was a lot of 'em, a lot of airplanes in the area then whenever I got up on top.

*But you think you saw the one that actually dropped on –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** That one that actually well, I'm not, I wouldn't say positively that's the one that actually dropped that particular bomb, but see there, them bombs were comin' from every angle and, and you uh, be on one side of the ship, you don't see on the other, see.

*But you, you saw the planes though.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yeah, the planes were flyin' -

*Did you immediately know that, that that plane was not American?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, not automatically. We were just tryin' to figure out sayin' well what them damn fools are doin' – that was the main question, what are them damn fools doin'? They're gettin' a little too rough. They must've missed their targets, you know. They thought maybe it was just a practice deal.

*Thought it was American planes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, American planes that missed the target. But come to find out that by that time, said target hell, he said that's, that's a got a red ball on it. That's Japanese. And then we, by that time everybody was runnin' to their stations. They didn't, it didn't have to be told. We were all run for their stations.

*And what was your station?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Mine was up on the, the deck above the bridge on a 50-caliber machine gun, and I, I climbed those uh, five, four decks up and uh, I uh, naturally everybody else was runnin' in every direction. Well on board ship, you have uh, rules, you know, of the road as they call it, and uh, everybody that's up forward that has to go aft or up, you go to on the uh, port side you go aft, and then you cross over and you come back up and you go up on the uh, starboard side and down on the, on the port side. In other words if you have to go down the ladder, well always do it on the port side as you're going aft, going backward, in other words to the stern, and uh so, I had to go all the way around and go through the deal to get to the, and the time I got around there, well everybody was bumpin' one another and all that. Everybody was gettin' their ammunition out, or tryin' to.

*And what was your job? You were at a 50-caliber –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I was on, I was the uh, loader on a 50 caliber. But we uh, whoever got there first, well you know, you get the ammunition out and set it up. Well, three of us was on the gun. Well, me and this other guy, the one that actually fired the gun, the gunner itself, well he wasn't, I don't know where he was at start, but he got there after me and this other boy did, and but we couldn't get into the thing because all the ammunition was locked up. Had a guy there to security come by, and I said, give me the damn key for this uh, ammunition. He says I don't have the key. He says, he had a pistol on and I said, well get the damn pistol and shoot the damn lock off, do it like that you know, and he says uh, he says, well I don't have any ammunition. I looked at him and sort of stopped and I never thought about it, but they didn't carry no ammunition in their pistols because well, I'd been used to hunting with uh, at home, and I was raised around guns all my life, so I, I'll bet that planned on shootin' that, that uh, lock off there. Well, couldn't do that, so couldn't find no way of breakin' that thing. Finally here come the officer and he uh, managed to find the key for it and that's when we started. It didn't take but I would say a minute, minute and a half.

*What were your thoughts while all of this was going on? What was going through your mind?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Just really was nothin' except just gettin' to gettin' that gun ready and start firin' at whoever was comin' too close to us, in other words, start fendin' off. That was a, you was kind of trained for that all along, even in boot camp you know, you'd have certain classes on firing and stuff and about gettin' – in other words the main thing is you wanted to get your ammunition and everything ready and be uh -

*Were you scared?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, not right then. I would say yes and no. I know one of the guys told, asked me one time, said was you ever scared? I said yeah, one time. And uh, he says, what do you mean one time? I said well, I was scared from the time that first damn bomb hit until the end of the war when I got home. That's just about the way it was. You know, you're scared all the time, but it's not, it's not really what you would unless you're thinkin' about it.

*Did it seem real when it was happening?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No.

*Or was it like watching a movie or like you were separate and not really a part of it?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, that's, that's a whole lot of it, yes, and then, then again, you don't think about what's, what the danger was. I never even thought about anything on some of those boys and on that Arizona when I saw it blow. I didn't think about how many it killed on there. And uh, to bring it back, uh, when that ship blew up, 140 I believe it was they said it was 140 some odd were out of my class in the uh, in San Diego.

*In boot camp, yeah.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, boot camp. They was uh, sent to it and uh, but you don't never, never get uh, scared until you have to set down and not have anything to do. That's whenever

you go to thinkin' and the best, that's the best thing that, best thing that any – well, I don't know if you've ever been in a car wreck or anything. You don't think about what's happening while it's happening, but afterwards you probably start shakin' like everybody.

*Yes.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** So that's, that's about the way it was on there. I know well uh, after we got the, the uh, machine guns and everything goin', well, we uh, each one of us have a different station you know for com-, what they call the general quarters. This was uh, commission two was what, what you call for whenever the, whenever you have this uh, airplanes and shootin' – in other words, you didn't need those 6-inch guns in the harbor. They'd shoot, start shootin' them damn things, you'd tear up more stuff in the harbor than the -

*You'd be shooting each other, right.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah. And -

*So it was all the small, the 20 millimeters –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** 40 millimeters, 5-inch -, 5-inch guns. I know that, and uh, those the rest of us that was free from our particular weapons, well we, we helped wherever we knew what to do, and uh, but uh, we, we got away from the, that anchorage and we went around on the south side of that, well, it'd be on the northeast, it'd be on the east side, uh, west side of that island, fort island. Then we had to turn around, and uh, in that uh, ship was 608 foot long, no tugs, no nothin' – that was unheard of precedent set that particular day that we turned that ship around just like if it was a canoe, and uh, went around back to the other side. Of course they stopped us and we had to wait for -

*I understand that twice your ship tried to get underway and get out of the harbor and they were called, you were called back.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, we was, we had, we had to stop, of course well, when we around at first uh, on the other side of that island, there was a doggone ship already hit in the middle of the channel. We couldn't get by. So we had to back up and uh, of course our, our ship had four screws on it, and uh, anyone that was trained or there was a few that was trained to uh, maneuver anything with four screws, you know like on a boat. You know, you put two forward and two aft, to the rear. Well you can swing that front end on around. Well that's how they maneuvered us uh, out of there, and we had to almost go back to the same spot we was tied up to start with. And then we turned around and, and they let us go because everybody was gettin' the hell out of there, and put it like that, put it in those words, they wanted to get the heck out of there.

*So as you were turned about and leaving, you actually passed battleship row, is that right?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, yeah.

*And you were outside, up on the –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I was still up on, up on the outside of – have you uh, do you have any pictures of that uh, of the Phoenix passing the -

*Yes, I have a picture of you passing West Virginia and the Arizona.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** All right now, is it, you got a, is it a lot of water on the, from the port side on?

*Can't tell.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, reason I'm asking that is that if you look uh, right at the bow, well about the first turret, uh, and you go back to, into the water back there towards uh, toward the bottom of your picture, well there's a periscope sticking out.

*I can't see that on my photo.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** That probably can't see it on that small of a picture. Well anyway that's, that was a midget submarine when we went by them.

*Is that right?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** That was a, and I, on my picture it is, it's sticking up about 3, 2 and a ½ or so feet above the water.

*I assume you did not know that as you were going by.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No, no we sure didn't, but they, they hung him, they got that, that submarine is in uh, that, they say that particular submarine is in uh, oh, Edward Nimitz got it over here in Fredericksburg.

*OK.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** So that's uh, but anyway, that submarine was there. They had a couple of others that they supposedly got, I don't know.

*So tell me your feelings. Now, you tried to get out. You had to go back. Meanwhile the planes are still coming, still bombing, still torpedoing, must be absolute chaos, explosions everywhere, smoke, fire, uh, I would imagine there were a lot of screams going on at the same time.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Oh yes, and see there, those sailors that was on the battle wagons, in fact uh, there's one living in Austin that's my president of my chapter, uh, Pearl Harbor Survivors Chapter, chapter that's in Austin, he's the president. Well he, he was on the West Virginia and he swam through that oil and get out of there, and uh, in other words I don't know if you've ever uh, really seen where how it looks whenever you got a bunch of oil on top of the water and you try to swim through it. You can imagine what that is. And that was burnin' and naturally some of it was burnin' – you had to, there was lots and lots of uh, guys that was in pretty good health until they got into that oil and, and burned.

*Now as you were going by battleship row passing these ships that were, well the Oklahoma was overturned by then I think, the Arizona had blown up, uh, West Virginia was sitting down in the water, California – I can't remember –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** California was uh, was partly leanin', but it was still -

*OK, so you, you were going by these things with all of this going on. What was going through your mind?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, at that particular time, I didn't have much time to think for myself because they was uh, settin' general quarters on account of we was going out of the harbor and they wanted to get everybody in their proper place and uh, see, some people were still on, not on board ship on account of they had uh, left the ship ahead of time and, and or they stayed, had the whole weekend off or something. So and a lot of the officers were not aboard.

*Yeah, I understand your captain and executive officer didn't even get on until just before you got underway.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, they, they was, they just barely made it and, and that was in fact if they hadn't have caught it on the run, they wouldn't have been there. But we was going out of there behind the St. Louis as they called it. I thought we was the first ones out, but evidently we wasn't. But anyway we was going out the channel. Well, the channel is considered a 5 knots, in other words you just ease on along there. Well, here we come with 35 knots. At 30 knots we was around 30 knots.

*So you were running just about full speed.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Hah?

*You were running just about full speed.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Just almost full speed, and uh, and also they uh, the, on further down the deal, down the channel, well there was a, the, what they call the, the net tender, he was trying to close the thing to keep the submarines out, the little ones, and uh, hell he was right in the middle of the channel and that we, here we come at 30 or so, 25 or 30 knots, whatever it was -

*And they were trying to close the -*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And they're trying to close the nets and they, he was blinkin' at us, and uh, OD on that told him, blink back at him, says get your so and so out of the way or else we're comin' to take you to sea with us. And we moved to the, to the outside of him, you know, we knew which net was tied, and we didn't want to get into the damn net, so we turned around and I mean we turned around - we uh, pulled over to the, to the well it would be to the starboard as much as we could, and when we went by, well we hooked part of his uh, that tug, and it threwed that tug about, well it lifted him out of the water, not completely, but you know, it lifted him far enough that, that it shoved him with his net and all, and uh, he knocked off a couple of our scuppers and, and scupper's that uh, things that on the side of the ship where the water uh, well, it's like a down drain on a house. And uh, so we uh, took on out. Well, the St. Louis was ahead of us.

*That was another cruiser.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, another cruiser just like ours. It's very, well in fact it's uh, I don't know if ours was 46, a CHall 46 and I forget what that cruiser was now, but anyway, that uh, whenever that was still in the channel, well the submarine of the big submarine fired a torpedo at

it, and it uh, I guess it was within 75, well it had to be further than that, about uh, a couple of hundred yards out, well it exploded, and uh, nobody knew, well, when we's, when the St. Louis knew that, saw that big gusher of water and everything come up, and they uh, had it all figured out later that that submarine fired at the St. Louis and had a true course runnin' right into it. Well if it had hit it, we'd have been stuck in there because we couldn't have come by. It wasn't wide enough to, for two ships to come by. And we uh, by doing that, let's see, uh, what they figured was that that torpedo hit one of those uh, outcroppings where they, where they was uh, where one of those doggone uh, machines that was uh, carrying out the channel – in other words put the piling that rip-rap up on the side -

*Yes sir.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well they figured that's what saved the St. Louis, so we went on out to sea and uh, followin' them we had three or four of the destroyers that come out of there, and then we made a sort of impromptu uh, fleet out of it and then we chased around there to the north of the, where they said the planes were comin' from and tryin' to, tryin' the other ships.

*You went out looking for the Japanese.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, for the Japanese. See, but they, they ain't no way, they ain't no way we would've been able to do anything because two little cruisers and we wasn't, we didn't have much more than target ammunition by then, and uh, then very little, well we did have some main battery, but you take two cruisers and a couple of destroyers to run into a fleet with 300 or 400 airplanes still flyin' around, there wouldn't be, we wouldn't have much of a chance.

*So you were out of Pearl Harbor by what time maybe?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Uh, I would say by uh, 12 o'clock.

*OK, by noon you were out.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** By noon, we was clear of it.

*And how long did you stay out?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** We stayed out 'til the 10<sup>th</sup>.

*'Til the 10<sup>th</sup>. So three days you were out. Now once you left Pearl Harbor of course, you left in the midst of the battle. There must have been a tremendous amount of speculation and concern and everything else among the crew members as to what had happened and how bad was it. Were you getting information or not getting information?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, we was getting quite a bit of information all right, but most of it was you know, hearsay and uh, by private radios and stuff like that, which uh, they was closing down as fast as they could find 'em, and you know, everybody had uh, not everybody, some people had these uh, walkie talkies and stuff like that which we had a method of listenin' to them, too. And uh, if you'll notice back there whenever where we were tied up, well right in front of it, might say on away from the battle wagons, not which straight uh, north, northwest kind of, northeast rather, well there's a they called it Aei, A-E-I, well, that's where they had a Japanese had a cabin there, and there was a lot of Japanese in that area, and we uh, I know that there was

times that uh, jokingly or otherwise, they would say well, that old Jap gettin', he knows we're back in port again, and sure enough I found out years later, and some of my uh, reading of spy uh, where this Japanese was caught in that area, so that was uh, they was, they had a spy deal all around 'em. In other words they, they really were there and they knew what we was doing and where we was, where our ships were and everything else.

*So you came back on the 10<sup>th</sup>, back into Pearl.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Back to Pearl, yeah.

*And uh, as you entered in and went in, you for the first time really saw the after effects of the devastation.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** All the, all the mess and stuff, yeah.

*Tell us what was it you saw and how did it affect you.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, I tell you, I, I didn't get a chance to see too much of it personally because we was uh, on the side that uh, where my station was at that time was uh, below the decks as I said, you know, and uh, want to add one thing in that, right in that part, as we was out there on the, on the uh, out of the channels and on the going out to sea further on the, on the 7<sup>th</sup>, well they had a, a submarine out there they know which one was the submarine like I say fired at the St. Louis, and uh, they also uh, what am I tryin' to put this together in a way that it actually happened, uh – my train of thought just fell out on me.

*That's OK. It's been a long time. We've been talking almost two hours here.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well that part I've been trying to remember this, but anyway, we was uh, had general quarters, yeah, that's what I was tryin' to say, general quarters. Well, naturally I was already sent down to the 5<sup>th</sup> deck below. Well, you don't see very much with uh, 4 x 4 walls, you know, and so anyway, we was down there and we had everything all set up and everything. We loaded uh, the hoist and everything full of uh, powder. They had the full of shells and all. In other words, they was ready to start battle, and about that time, one of the uh, oh, the dang destroyers dropped a depth charge on a supposedly a submarine there, which could've been or I don't, we don't really know, but anyway that doggone depth charge went off. Well you down there uh, down in that water 5 decks, you know what that would sound like against well, you'd put a drum or something. But anyway, that uh, they, they uh, excuse me, they uh, went – when that doggone shell, I mean that when that depth charge went off, I mean it made noise and we was settin' around out uh, inside that uh, powder room, and I kind of looked up and thought to myself, well, dang, maybe I'm in the wrong place. Maybe should \_\_ get out – figure out how to get out of this thing. But that old uh, petty officer we had down there with us, that was the man in charge, he said fellas, he says, you don't have to worry about this. Just I'm, I think he was as scared as we was but he was tryin' to brace up everybody's feelin's, and he says uh, if that torpedo ever comes in here, you know what, we'll be the first ones off this damn tub. Just like that, this damn tub. Well, you just start thinkin' about it, well yeah, if that torpedo comes in and puts a hole in both sides of this, this thing, I said we will be the first ones off of it.

*That's right.*



**Albert Kamenicky:** And he just unconcerned like he didn't, and I often thought about him. I said well you know, he's about the only one that could cover up his how scared he was, and I'll, we was all scared then.

*When was the first time that you had an opportunity to observe all the devastation around you?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, when we's come, when we comin' back in, we was able to see part of it because if you was on one side of the ship and then you really should've been on the other side, but uh, I saw where, where the uh, battle wagon and all that was uh, turnin' over, you know, turned over and laid over, and then we saw where the uh, we'd been around over there to our what they call, see where we was tied up was uh, what they called a buoy C, C-6, and we got back around to place. Well uh, we had to pick up our, what we was goin' back for was to pick up our chain, uh, well, your anchor chain, because whenever there, whenever they couldn't get steam up to uh, lift that uh, anchor which weighed 13,000 pounds plus uh, on each side, well they couldn't lift up that anchor, well what they done is they cut it loose up on top and, and it went down the chain and all, so then they had to go down and get it. Well, that's what we went back for when we come back from, and naturally, you uh, get the chance to see a little bit and then you have to do somethin', you're sent on, well you're doin' your job and you have to go around on the opposite side of whatever you're doin' and then you see a little bit more. But it was, it looked like heck, but your ships were still burnin', you know, to some extent.

*What were your thoughts about what had happened to your life and, and where you were gonna be because of what happened?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, I, I kind of, well you know, we got away from it and like I say, we didn't really think too much of the danger of it, and we knew that, well from here on, it's gonna be battle after battle. But you know, that's something that I, I would say and it may not sound like bein' truthful, but I never really worried too much about that because well, maybe I didn't have sense enough to. And uh, my \_\_\_ was gonna come up in the, you know, the future. Of course whenever you get everything all set up and, uh, say you was goin' into combat or whatever you was goin', when you get it all set up but you don't uh, you sort of set back and rest or whatever, you don't think about all that, and that's \_\_\_ let me put it like this, if you get ready to go to town and you got your car all filled up with and checked out and everything and you, you get in it and start it and just you, you uh, put it in gear. After that you don't think about what, what could happen. You know, it just, it's just one of those things. Well, I, I was told that it was God's way of, of uh, keepin' you from goin' crazy whenever something happened, and that I, and I kind of I believed it on that part.

*Is there any other aspect of the Pearl Harbor attack that sticks out in your memory that you'd like to share with us?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well uh, other than uh, we, we uh, come in on the 10<sup>th</sup> and then of course we had to replenish with what ammunition we could get, and they, they was, all that was coordinated in the way that I never could understand how they could do it so quick, but they had barges loaded with ammunition for us headed for the St. Louis, and they, and then they headed for the other ones that, that shot up all their ammunition. They was all reloading everything. We come in after 10 days of that not bein' ready to go to sea to start with. Naturally we had to have oil, and that was, that was a whole lot of uh, parts you had that, in other words your supplies and your fuel and was the main thing. The fuel and then your ammunition, and then your food. That was the three priorities that you had to have, and of course they always told us, says well, we got

to have the fuel to be able to go, we got to have the ammunition to be able to protect yourself, but as far as that goes, man can live for several days on, on uh, nothing to eat, but they always tried to have a little bit, what they call C rations. That's the way they uh, figured everything, so we loaded, we replenished all of our supplies we could get and ammunition. But during Pearl Harbor itself, our gun number three was uh, had some fellas on there that was good. They was, they didn't hardly ever miss anything, and uh, that uh, whenever they was firin' that 5-inch 25, that, one of the officers uh, was hollerin' at it, at the gunner on there, he said don't shoot up that plane. That's American plane. That was whenever these B-17's come into the harbor there during the battle, and old uh, Tiny Classen was the loader on that weapon, and he was a big, strong as an ox, and he finally kicked the uh, automatic uh, rammer out of the, in other words they could cut it out and it would do it by hand, and he was throwin' them shells in through that thing and they was firin' almost uh, continuous fire out of that 5-inch 25 which was a, they fired more shells than, than any other gun on there, on our ship, and he uh, at this officer uh, hollered at him don't shoot that plane. That was an American plane. Old Tiny, he didn't, he wasn't lookin' at no airplane. All he was doin' was loadin' that thing, and he turned around and hollered back at him, he said, that damn thing flies, don't it? And then he hollered, "fire" and of course back again. But see those uh, those 7, I don't remember just how many they was uh, B-17's.

*Yeah, they landed right down in the middle of it.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, they, they did, they did, they was really surprised. You talk about somebody that didn't know what was goin' on.

*Was the uh, Phoenix hit at all?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** No.

*It was not hit.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, I'll put it like this. We had one uh, stray 50-caliber uh, shell that went up and come back down, and it was American, American uh, 50. And you know, that thing's about 2, 2 inches long, and that thing went up and it come down, and the forward director, that's that one that's right in above the bridge there, antiaircraft uh, director, well, that thing come and went through the uh, top of the deal and landed on the seat of the pointer of that uh, director, and uh, this guy that was settin' next to that seat, that seat was still vacant because uh, like I say, the boy that uh, that was uh, supposed to be on it, on in that settin' in that seat, he hadn't gotten there yet, and that's what the bullet was still hot, and uh, it was a kind of funny deal about that was he picked it up but he dropped it right quick because it was too hot to hold, and he put it down over there and when this guy come, come there, well if he had been settin' there, that would've come right down through the middle of his, the top of his head and went right straight through it. That would've been, that was the only hit, and that wasn't really a hit, it was a fall.

*Right, that's pretty lucky. How about uh, were you credited, was the Phoenix credited with shooting any, down any Japanese planes?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** We had, we was uh, well what you would call, we was credited but I think with three, or two or three, but uh, the way they was shootin' and the way they was uh, followed it, you really couldn't see – that ship over there, he might put three or four bullets into it, or

shells into them, and the time he got over to where we was at, well we finally put a final deal, you know. It was just, it, something like that, a battle like that you can't tell. It's hard to, to uh, distinguish. Of course they had some people that uh, credited us with so many and assisted with so many and so forth. We was credited with one, I think with one B-17, so at first, nobody knew that they was even comin' in as far as on, in the fleet itself. So but uh -

*OK, uh, anything else from the Pearl Harbor experience that you'd like to convey?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, I don't, I don't uh, that's just about the whole thing as far as Pearl Harbor itself. Like you say, I'll think about a dozen things later on, but they won't be no, no need to later on. But uh, oh it was just like you say, one chaos of a deal, and we had to, we learned a whole lot in a few, like you say in a few minutes.

*How do you think the Pearl Harbor experience affected the rest of your life?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** For the rest of my life?

*Has it had an effect on the rest of your life or is it something that's from the past that's gone?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, I, I would say that it did because of the fact that it made me a whole lot more careful. Of course I, you know, after I got back to, back to the States, we come back to the States and then we uh, with a convoy after we loaded this one on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, we left there with a convoy to San Francisco. We got to San Francisco with this slow convoy. Then we turned around and, and they had a convoy of a bunch of ships that were a little bit faster but no one, you know, no freighter was fast, not like a, a military ship, and so they uh, we went and took them back to uh, Pearl and uh, by doing that, there was all these guys that was and uh, helpers and stuff, in other words they're getting the equipment and everything together so they could start doin' something. Well see, that was after the 10<sup>th</sup>. Well, we never, we went back in and we uh, what I say, from Frisco back to Pearl, and then we took another one, turned right around and took another one and come on back to Frisco again. Well that's, that's uh, three times we crossed there. Well, most of the books and stuff I read and uh, that, that we was uh, runnin' convoy duty for several months. Well, I don't know how you can figure several months because the fact that we left there on the 11<sup>th</sup> and uh, made the trip to Frisco and, and anchored right off of Alcatraz Island, and uh, we didn't even go in. Here come the other one and we turned around and took off back to Pearl, and then we, when we got there, they had a bunch uh, those other ships that was unloaded and reloaded and took the, all the wives and stuff like that, children and wives, they took 'em out of there.

*Let me ask you one other question about Pearl. When the attack was going on, how long into the attack was it before you realized that it was the Japanese attacking as opposed to a drill?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** You talkin' about myself?

*Yeah, yourself personally.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I would say that uh, as soon as I saw them, that red ball and when that uh, ship uh, when the Arizona blew up and we was across there just pretty close to it and it was still far enough from me that it uh, the pressure of the, of the explosion come up, I would say I guess maybe an hour or so. It would be about - but I knew that they was Jap's planes because of the fact that well as much as I knew about the red ball and all that on, you know, we hadn't, not

being in the Navy very long, I still hadn't uh, been through all those different classes you know, for, for uh, distinguishing markings on airplanes and stuff. We had to, we had to do that later on. I could tell you any ship there, any plane, any country that was anywhere later on in latter years.

*OK Mr. Kamenicky, you've given us a lot of great information and we certainly appreciate it and I know you have a lot more to say because you were involved in some rather substantial battles during the rest of the war, and we want to talk about those, too, but I didn't think we'd spend this much time getting through the end of Pearl Harbor, but you know, that was a pretty big event so it does take some time to do that. What I'm gonna suggest is that uh, we continue this for the rest of the war, uh, and maybe in the next couple of days or something.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I would like that because there's quite a things that happened that after the, after this point, at this point on that uh, you know, were interesting and would be interesting to me. I never was one to uh, let's see, I don't know how to say this was understood in a way that, in other words I never was a headline grabber myself I'm talking about.

*No, I understand.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** But I like to, what I want to do and I consider this not a headline grabber for me, I consider this as future, in other words the more you know about something like that the more you know about the future, the less you're apt to get into trouble by not knowing it, if that makes any sense.

*Yes, I do.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** If these kids and stuff, and I'm talkin' about the kids, I'm talkin' about the ones that's just bein' born now can read about what we had, they're not gonna, they're not gonna be uh, as apt to go into war and maybe as bein' belligerent to somebody and I'm, I'm hopin' that they'll be ready to fight if they have to, but at the same time, you know we've got people in this country that's so belligerent though. They'd start a war over anything, and the past wars were, were that-a-way. Well, they killed the Duke of uh, what was that, the Duke of Edinburgh or whatever it was that started that first World War.

*The Arch Arch Duke Ferdinand, Austria.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** And uh, just because they killed him. They killed a whole bunch of 'em as far as that goes in Pearl Harbor there that would've started a way, that's a \_\_\_\_\_. So but I have a – I was real lucky to be able to go through the entire war without getting -

*You certainly were and just think about, and this is one thing I've been thinking about ever since you were talking about this, on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> of December, you were loading high explosive ammunition into the magazines of the U.S.S. Arizona.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Uh-huh, the one that blew up -

*If the Japanese had chosen one day earlier to commence that attack –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** I wouldn't have been here.

*That's right.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** You wouldn't have been talking to me. And there's been several other times that you know, during the time that it just seemed like well, like we say later on, when we finally well the kamikaze's come along right at last.

*I know, you've been attacked by airplanes, kamikaze's, surface ships, submarines and you got a lot to tell the future, but I think we put you through a lot so far and I think you need a break.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well, I appreciate that and -

*How about if I contact you either later this afternoon or tomorrow about setting up another time where we can continue this thing?*

**Albert Kamenicky:** That'd be all right.

*That'll give you a little time to rest and think about it some more and think about the rest of the war, because we only covered the opening day.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Might say the first uh, well really, uh, that uh second trip to Frisco what was just before – well let's see, I got my first uh, leave on uh, to go ashore on American shore after Pearl Harbor was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January I think, so that was, and so there's a whole lot and our trip to uh, from there on is what has lots of meaning to me and it would to people I hope.

*Sure, I know they would, certainly to me.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Well let's see, I'm going to, I'll be here today and uh, I was supposed to have a cousin come to do some work for me, but I don't know for sure. I haven't heard from him so I don't know.

*All right, well I will either try and contact you this afternoon later, or tomorrow about setting up a time, and while we were doing this, there has been a reporter here with me from the Austin-American Statesman and she would like permission to give you a call if she has a few questions she'd like to ask –*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Any time she wants to.

*Her name is Claire Osborn – O-S-B-O-R-N, and she wanted permission to give you a call and ask you a few questions if that's all right.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** That'd be all right with me because like I say, this here, I'm what they call a military buff I guess you call it that. That's a good word to put it, and get my pencil there, that uh, Claire -

*Claire Osborn.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, mention to, tell her one thing that uh -

*She's listening.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Uh-huh. Do what?

*She's listening.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** There's one thing I have some people that called me, especially there's, well it's some men and some women, and they're sellin' this insurance or personal card or something like that, now don't let me, I tried not to say anything until I find out that this is who it is.

*Just remember the name, just remember Claire Osborn.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Yeah, I got it here. Yeah, I knew and Osborn. We had an Osborn that worked for Santa Fe, that was a, he was a chief, chief engineer, but anyway he worked out of Chicago. He was finally superintendent whenever I knew him.

*All right, I'm gonna let you go because we've held you long enough and we'll get back to you about setting up a time to cover the rest of the war.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** OK, no problem on that, like I say, I'm settin' here day after day just bidin' out the time.

*We certainly appreciate your time, we really do, and I know you've got a lot more to tell, and we'll get to it.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** OK, well we'll see you then.

*OK sir.*

**Albert Kamenicky:** Thank you very much and appreciate it.

*OK, bye bye.*

*[End of recording]*